

AMENDED CLAIM SET:

1. (currently amended) A savory, shelf-stable, particulate, meltable, food-grade plasticized composition, said composition having a water activity A_w of less than 0.50 and comprising an oil-in-water emulsion of:

10-30 weight-% of a protein that forms a thermally reversible meltable gel;

15-50 weight-% of plasticizer components to solubilize the protein, comprising 10-40 weight-% of a polyol plasticizer and 3-15 weight-% of a non-polyol plasticizer;

10-40 weight-% ~~a level~~ of an edible oil ~~sufficient~~ to provide proper texture, mouthfeel, and melt characteristics to the plasticized composition;

5-25 weight-% moisture; and

10-40 weight-% of a savory flavoring component.

2. & 3. (cancelled).

4. (original) The savory, shelf stable composition of claim 1, wherein the water activity is less than or equal to about 0.43.

5. (cancelled).

6. (currently amended) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 1 [[5]], wherein the protein is casein, the polyol plasticizer is glycerin, the non-polyol plasticizer is sodium lactate,

the oil component is partially hydrogenated soybean oil, and the flavoring component is a cheese flavor.

7. (previously presented) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 6, comprising about 18 weight-% casein, about 21 weight-% glycerin, about 7 weight-% sodium lactate, about 21 weight-% partially hydrogenated soybean oil, and about 24 weight-% cheese component.

8. (currently amended) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 1 [[5]], wherein the protein is casein, the polyol plasticizer is glycerin, the non-polyol plasticizer is sodium lactate, the oil component is stabilized animal fat, and the flavoring component is a meat flavor.

9. (previously presented) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 8, comprising about 18 weight-% casein, about 20 weight-% glycerin, about 7 weight-% sodium lactate, about 18 weight-% stabilized animal fat, and about 25 weight-% meat extract and seasoning component.

10. (currently amended) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 1 [[5]], wherein the protein is casein, the polyol plasticizer is glycerin, the non-polyol plasticizer is comprised of monosaccharides originating from the vegetable component, the oil component is partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, and the flavoring component is a vegetable flavor.

11. (previously presented) The savory, shelf-stable composition of claim 10, comprising about 20 weight-% casein, about 17 weight-% glycerin, about 35 weight-% flavor characterizing vegetable component, about 20 weight-% partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, and about 8 weight-% salt and seasoning component.

12. – 16. (cancelled).